



# **Sundays Will Never Be the Same: Racing, Tragedy, and Redemption--My Life in America's Fastest Sport**

*Darrell Waltrip*

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**From the former NASCAR racing champion and current FOX Sports announcer, an intimate account of one of the most dramatic and tragic days in the history of NASCAR: the 2001 Daytona 500—the day that racing legend Dale Earnhardt, Sr. died.**

THREE-TIME NASCAR CHAMPION DARRELL WALTRIP knew that big changes were in the wind on the morning of February 18, 2001. For the first time in his long and storied career, Darrell would be watching the race from the broadcast booth high above the track, explaining its complexities to a television audience of millions. His younger brother Michael Waltrip would be among the starting drivers. Michael, who had competed in 462 NASCAR races without a win, would be piloting one of two cars owned by legendary driver Dale Earnhardt. Earnhardt would be racing too, as would Dale Earnhardt Jr., the 2000 runner-up for Rookie of the Year.

*Sundays Will Never Be the Same* opens with a heart-stopping account of that dramatic race. By the time the sun set on that day, Michael Waltrip would have captured his first checkered flag in NASCAR's biggest race, Dale Earnhardt Jr. would have placed second, and Dale Earnhardt, the sport's brightest star, would have passed into eternity.

The sudden death of Dale Earnhardt on the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500 was a traumatic loss for the entire NASCAR family, and few were affected more deeply than Darrell Waltrip. During the course of their tumultuous thirty-year association, Dale and Darrell had been friends, then "frenemies," and finally friends again. Darrell regales the reader with his earliest memories of the fiercely competitive kid from Kannapolis, and he describes the highs and lows of their relationship through the twin arcs of their overlapping careers.

Along the way, Waltrip provides a fascinating history of racing in Daytona and offers glimpses of some of the sport's most colorful characters, including Bill France, Junior Johnson, Cale Yarborough, Bobby Allison, and Richard Petty. He weaves the story of his own unlikely journey from the small-town ovals and rural roads of Kentucky (where his talents were largely devoted to running from the cops) to the grandest tracks and richest purses in motor racing. With his customary candor, Darrell gives us an insider's view of some of NASCAR's greatest battles and most memorable moments. This is an epic that only a storyteller with Waltrip's access and experience could write.

*Sundays Will Never Be the Same* reaches its crescendo with a heart-wrenching insider account of that pivotal weekend in Daytona, including a poignant pre-race interview in which Dale rhapsodized about his family and his plans for the future. After the wreck, Waltrip takes us along on his frantic ride to the trauma center and into the waiting room, where Dale's family and friends struggle to accept the unthinkable. Darrell recounts the weeks that followed: the shock and disbelief, the outpouring of grief from around the world, and the top-to-bottom safety changes NASCAR eventually made in what would become the most enduring tribute to Dale Earnhardt and his legacy.

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With touching nostalgia and his trademark wit, NASCAR Hall-of-Famer Darrell Waltrip recalls scenes from his remarkable life, vividly recounting memorable moments with some of the giants of the sport—such as this first encounter with the young man who would become his "frenemy," NASCAR's legendary superstar, Dale Earnhardt:

One evening a bleary-eyed mustachioed young man wearing a dirty T-shirt and Hush Puppies wandered

into the shop carrying a half-empty fifth of Jack Daniel's. He regarded me silently for several minutes, taking an occasional pull from the bottle. Finally Robert introduced us.

"This here's Dale," Robert said, in his Virginia twang. "He's married to my daughter Brenda. You may have heard of his dad, Ralph. Dale's a driver and a mechanic."

I walked over to Dale and stuck out my hand. "Darrell Waltrip," I said. "Nice to meet you." Dale drained the bottle and tossed it into a nearby barrel, where it landed with a clatter, then he wiped his mouth with the back of his arm.

"This your car?" he said.

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